

About the Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre



Overview & History

The Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre (MPAC) is a cultural facility with three main performance halls: the Large Hall, a convertible hall that can seat 750 to 1,800 guests; the Small Hall with 288 seats; and the Experimental Theater, with 360 seats. The MPAC is not only equipped to serve as a venue for state-of-the-art performing arts, but it is also well suited for different types of functions, such as conventions and other events.

As a new hub for the arts in Matsumoto, in addition to offering the chance to appreciate a diverse array of performing arts, the MPAC supports the thriving culture and art activities of local citizens and facilitates conversation, exchange, and cultural richness in the community.

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| Name | Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre |
| Address | 3-10-1 Fukashi, Matsumoto, Nagano, 390-0815 |
| Contact | E-Mail mpac@mpac.jp |
| Closed | Open year-round (may periodically close for maintenance) |
| Hours | 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. |
| Administrative organization | Matsumoto Arts and Culture Promotion Foundation |
| Area | Site area 8,995.76m ² Building area 7,080.02m ² Total floor area 19,184.37m ² |
| Building structure | Combined steel and reinforced concrete structure Steel frame or reinforced concrete structure in some areas Seven, above-ground floors and two, below-ground floors |
| Design | Toyo Ito & Associates, Architects |
| Year opened | 2004 |

The Performing Arts Centre's Community Activities

The Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre leads a variety of community-based activities in collaboration with local citizens. Working together cooperatively to create works put forth by the Centre, these efforts are experiments that help support and further cultivate the MPAC, and even energize Matsumoto itself.

Matsumoto Theater Factory

The Matsumoto Theater Factory is the product of Artistic Director Kazuyoshi Kushida's dream of creating a theater school. Using the Performing Arts Centre as a base, the concept is to allow the local people to seek out a theater of their very own and build it their very own style. Theater members are those who have passed an audition, regardless of having formal theater experience or not. They participate in a series of workshops, continuously rehearse for the performance, and along with teachers and experts from a multitude of theatrical genres, the members share the entire theatrical production process including the act of performing the play. This process brings a unique, personal theatrical expression to life through the thoughts, actions, and imaginations of every single person involved.

Shinshu Matsumoto Kabuki

Starting with their Kabuki play, Natsumatsuri Naniwa Kagami, in 2008, and the subsequent Sakura Giminden (2010), Tennichibo (2012), Sannin Kichisa (2014), and Yotsuya Kaidan (2016), the Shinshu Matsumoto Kabuki has become a popular staple of Matsumoto's summer art scene. The project developed out of the Bunkamura Theatre Cocoon's "Cocoon Kabuki" production in Tokyo, which was created by Artistic Director Kazuyoshi Kushida and the late Kanzaburo Nakamura as they sought to reimagine kabuki in the style of contemporary drama.

Much more than simply moving Cocoon Kabuki to Matsumoto, Shinshu Matsumoto Kabuki gives a local Matsumoto cast (or, for Tennichibo, a local musical ensemble) of men and women of all ages the opportunity to actually perform alongside professional kabuki actors. Furthermore, the kabuki production gets the entire city of Matsumoto involved and excited, with local resident volunteers doing various kind of support work, such as showing guests to their seats, selling souvenirs, backstage catering, and providing soba noodle service.

Daidogei (Street Performance) Festival in Matsumoto

Together with the Shinshu Matsumoto Kabuki event, the Daidogei Festival was held for the first time on Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre's fifth anniversary in 2009 and has been held every other year since. During this citywide event, visitors young and old can walk around Matsumoto enjoying numerous delightful shows by professional street performers. There are also a variety of other related events that take place, and with the cooperation of local businesses and the support of Matsumoto residents who help with preparations and festival operations, the Daidogei Festival is a one-of-a-kind collaborative event that can only be found in Matsumoto.

Greeting from the Artistic Director

“Time, wisdom, and effort” multiplied by “understanding, expectation, and collaboration”:

Transforming Matsumoto into a hub for cultural transmission

Greetings! This year in 2013, the Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre will be celebrating its 10th year anniversary. Time certainly goes by quickly. It feels like it was just the other day when we opened. Still, to me, it also feels like it could have been ages ago, too!

I was asked to come in April of 2003, one year before the building was finished. The official completion ceremony was then held on March 3, 2004, just one week after the newly-elected mayor of Matsumoto took office.

That year was one filled with brand new experiences for me. As you all know well, there were many who opposed the construction of the Performing Arts Centre. I had just come to Matsumoto and I spent a lot of time speaking to those people. I also attended the city council meeting and had to answer all kinds of questions.

There were many occasions when I felt the people were being irrational. Yet, strangely enough, I began to sense a sort of positive, optimistic premonition inside myself. It was the kind of feeling that defies any logical explanation—it was as if I felt something coming in the wind. How could I, as a person who had spent a lifetime in theater, ignore this feeling, this blowing wind?

I wrote above that “you all know well” how the situation was back then, but in reality ten years ago, there must be people who were still children at that time and do not remember. There must also be many people who did not come to Matsumoto until later, as well. And perhaps, there are even some who would prefer to forget what went on in the past. Still, I think the memory of that rough time is a very important thing for us. Now, Matsumoto and the Performing Arts Centre can greet the year of our 10th anniversary with confidence, which I believe is thanks to the force of that “wind” I had felt ten years ago—and still feel to this day.

Construction was completed on March 3, 2004, but the Performing Arts Centre did not open as a theater until August 29, after all the preparations for opening were finished. So, I would say the Centre’s official “birthday” is August 29. Because Matsumoto is always right in the middle of its Saito Kinen Festival (now called the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival) in August, I barely have time to remember our birthday amidst all hubbub, but on that very first day ten years ago, we hosted the first showing of the *Wozzeck* opera in the Large Hall at the same time as the first showing of

Scapin (a play that I directed myself) in the Small Hall. The Theater Park was transformed into a bewildering jumble of the very formally dressed Wozzeck viewers and the young audience of Scapin. Seeing this, I thought to myself, this is exactly the kind of theater I hoped we would become.

2013 Ten Year Anniversary Program

We have done a lot since then, but since I do not have the luxury of time to look back over everything, instead, I will talk about our upcoming plans and vision for the future of the Performing Arts Centre.

First off, in June, we will be presenting the play Tsuki To Taiyo To Dorobo To (The Moon, the Sun, and the Thief) as part of the World Children's Literature Discovery Project in Matsumoto. Actually, the script is based on one that I wrote when I was 19 years old and had performed only once on stage. An old friend from high school brought me the script a few years back, asking if I remembered it.

The script had been handwritten and copied with a mimeograph on coarse paper and had turned brown over the years. My friend had carefully bound the script, as-is, into a book. I had written it 50 years ago! Reading over the script, I realized that I had not changed one bit, which made me feel strangely pathetic, yet happy all at the same. When I showed it to Tadashi Kato who was in charge of direction, he immediately said, "Let's do this!" Feeling both embarrassed and delighted, how could I say no?

In July, it is time for the 2013 version of the Kuchu Cabaret (Sky Cabaret). The Kuchu Cabaret of 2011 had been more popular than I had imagined, but its success cannot only be credited to myself, or even the performers and the staff. Rather, it was the viewers from Matsumoto who had gathered around the stage and their receptiveness that created an extraordinary and wondrous atmosphere that permeated through the entire theater.

Even the guests who came from outside of Matsumoto were so impressed that they raved about the show across Twitter and other social media platforms. As we plan to build up the Kuchu Cabaret further, I hope it will become the center of our summer festival.

Then comes August and the performance of Stravinsky's *L'Histoire du soldat* (The Soldier's Tale) at the Saito Kinen Festival that began the year before last. Until now, the play was directed by French director Laurent Lévy, but this year I will be directing it in a brand new way. Please look forward to watching *L'Histoire du soldat* this year, as well, whether you have already seen it or not.

In October, we will be showing our original opening show, *Scapin*, for the first time in nine years. In staying true to our original intentions, it will be a pleasure to have our Matsumoto guests once again watch *Scapin* after nine years, and for myself to perform in the play again after nine years.

In December, the Matsumoto City Opera will be presenting *Carmen*. The year before last, *Die Zauberflöte* (The Magic Flute) directed by Akira Shirai turned out to be a fantastic performance that showed us just how talented the Matsumoto City Opera was. When I saw that performance, I was so happy to see that our city opera was not simply imitating others; rather, the opera now had its very own unique Matsumoto-flavored style thanks to the local members that make up the group.

Once we move into 2014, in March, we will be presenting a very, very important work that I, too, feel is a critical piece to show. Please wait just a little bit longer until we announce what the performance will be.

Later that March, we will also present Matsumoto Theater Factory's newest performance, a play created by local residents of Matsumoto. The Theater Factory is a project that I had strongly been considering ever since I took over as artistic director, but it has finally started to take off recently.

It is my hope that the project will continue to develop more and more to become an innovative theatrical school that will be one of its kind in Japan. That is, a place where all kinds of people—

from actors and actresses aiming to become professionals, to free-minded and creative amateurs, as well as all the diverse types of people seeking to learn something through theater—can inspire, motivate, and learn from each other.

Planning Matsumoto's Summer Culture Festival

Another plan encompassed in our vision for the future is a cultural festival. I have always thought it would wonderful to have a festival like the theater festival in France's Avignon, a city located in the southern region of Provence; or the Edinburgh Festival in Scotland. In places like these, although the festivals are relatively small, being held in charismatic, culturally flourishing towns, they are rich and lively events that garner the attention of everyone around.

The festival held in the town of Sibiu, Romania, which once presented kabuki theater, is now one of the most famous in all of Europe. The population of Sibiu is just about the same as Matsumoto's, but economically speaking, Romania is much poorer than Japan. Despite this fact, Sibiu is remarkable in the way that it culturally conveys and expresses itself, giving hope to and inspiring its citizens throughout the country.

Still, we have to remember that in Japan and other countries, the circumstances differ greatly on many levels, so simply trying to imitate someone else's festival will not prove successful. Japan must do it in its own Japanese way, and Matsumoto in its own Matsumoto-esque style: We must hold our own dreams and aspirations and devise our own unique way of doing things. This in itself is what "culture" entails.

The Saito Kinen Festival, developed over many years by Seiji Ozawa; the Shinshu Matsumoto Kabuki, where Kanzaburo Nakamura devoted himself to fascinate the audience; the Daidogei (Street Performance) Festival, the Kuchu Cabaret, and the other new cultural forces born right here in Matsumoto—My vision for a culture festival is one in which all of these, along with a diverse array of people coming from a diverse array of places, are combined into one whole.

Let me also mention another important thing: TC Alp, Matsumoto's professional theater company. It has been about five years since TC Alp was formed, with its first members consisting of the young participants of one of my theater camps (I had been holding in mainly Hokkaido but they joined when they heard it was coming to Matsumoto), Nihon University's College of Art alumni who I used to teach, and young people born and raised in Matsumoto who wanted to become professional actors and actresses. Now, hearing their story, the members come from all over the place.

The TC Alp company practices here in Matsumoto, believing strongly in the new possibilities of producing theater in the city. They must become a theater company of original and charismatic expression that the citizens of Matsumoto will love and feel pride in, because it is they (of course, I myself a member as well) who, through theater, will have to become leaders of culture of Matsumoto. The Matsumoto Theater Factory, TC Alp, and a cultural festival: these are the three pillars that form the foundation of the Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre's vision for the future, welcoming in our tenth year of operation.

Lastly, I would like the space in the Performing Arts Centre to become more of a place that everyone can use freely for communication and exchange. Also, I would like to make the so-called Theater Park (the wide-open area on the second floor) a place where there is always something going on. It does not need to be a huge event, but the Theater Park is a "park of theater" after all!

It could be anything—you know, meet new people, make new friends, discover new ideas, have fun, make some noise, tell each other secrets, etc, etc. Along with the Theater Cafe, I would love to make it a place where sometimes you can go in and change it into a completely different, fun space; a park where everyone gets involved and creates a place of their own making.

There also more and more people who anticipate the publication of our PR Magazine, Maku Ga Agaru (The Curtain Rises). Perhaps it is going over the top a bit, but we are even talking about making this website one that you just cannot wait to go check.

We are definitely going to need much more time, wisdom, and effort to get all these things accomplished! Even more so, we are going to need everyone's understanding, expectations, and collaboration. And, never forget how important it is to have a heart that can sense the wind blowing, no matter how faint it may be.

Artistic Director, Matsumoto Performing Arts Centre

Kazuyoshi Kushida